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Please send any comments, questions, or corrections to:
editor@flyc.us

Commodore's Comments

by Terry Stewart

SV Syren

Looking Forward

Now that the major holidays are behind us, it's time to begin the task of planning the 2023 Yacht Club calendar. I believe some dates and events have already been sketched out and possibly our February meeting could solidify those dates and set a budget to live by. Tentatively, we talked about meeting at "Panera Bread" in Big Flats, like last year, which I think made travel easier for members who reside relatively close to there. At our end of year dinner, the date set was February 11th at 10am. How does this sound to everyone now? By the time this newsletter comes out, February 11th will be fairly close, so hopefully I will have made some phone calls to shore up the specifics.



In other news, it appears the east end of our marina storage is evolving in such a way that if we need to store any vessels way down there it will be available. The "Horseheads Brewing" location at the marina is planning to be open on a few specific dates in the upcoming months. One date is the "Ice Bar celebration" at the Harbor Hotel. So, if you are around town that weekend, check it out. Thankfully we are snowless at this time, so checking on your boat is an easy thing to do, and we only have about 90 days before it all starts over again.

I hope everyone's winter is moving along smoothly. We look forward to some sunshine and the beginning of our 2023 season.

-Terry

Vice Commodore's Comments

by John Chesbrough

SV Aquarell



Refuge in the Mediterranean

Greetings from Cyprus where we visit our son Martin, his wife Alisha and their one-year-old daughter, Sophia. We are still in Nicosia where the temperatures are in the mid-60s and mild, rainy

days are common in winter, not so much during summer when it gets very hot. Then it's time for the coast (east, south, or west). We recently spent a day visiting Martin's friend from work, Asaf, who with his family (wife, two sons) lives in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It is controlled by Turkey but has no sovereign identity and is not recognized by any other country. We were given some insight of his village which recently expanded in population. Asaf and family expertly entertained us with much good food and at least a bushel of oranges and lemons from their front yard.

Northern Cyprus is difficult to describe. There is little in the way of regulation and law, making it an 'easy' refuge for immigrants from Syrian, Ethiopian, Nigerian, et cetera, who are in great numbers. Evidently it is easy for them to illegally step into Cyprus where refugees are already present. As a member of the European Union, Cyprus is a desirable destination.

The flow of refugees out of the Near East and Northern Africa runs across the Mediterranean Sea. The coyotes who arrange for passage and transportation make a huge profit from the refugees who are willing to risk their lives in search of a better life. The watercraft range from large inappropriate inflatables to very second-hand commercial fishing boats. The watercraft are always over-crowded to increase the profit. Statistics for survival versus fatality (drowning, starvation, murder) are horrific. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees totaling about 3.7 million.

The history of Cyprus and its close relationship with Mediterranean travel is extensive, starting with the fabled Phoenicians, continuing through the British Empire with insatiable hunger for lumber to keep the mighty fleet in big numbers. Today both England and Cyprus have limited forests as a result.

The Covid epidemic stopped a lot of ferry service to/from Greece and Turkey but it's due to return this springtime. Also, there are a lot of luxury cruise ships, at least half a dozen, at anchor off Limassol. The wealthy Russians who supported that portion of tourism are fewer and further as those cruise ships might be for sale cheap.

It is eye-opening to contemplate ocean travel and commerce with all the contributing political and economic factors.

- John

Port Tacks

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Rear Commodore's Comments

by Don Swanson



It's been a quiet off season up here in the Finger Lakes as many of you locals need not be reminded. If you are an outdoor enthusiast during the winter months, perhaps skiing, snowmobiling, or even making snow angels, it's been a dud, a non-winter. Dry and warmer than "normal", whatever "normal" is with climate change. Personally, I like to make the most of the winter by cross country and alpine skiing, but truth be

told, rain doesn't need to be shoveled, and I am not feeling too bad about that.

On the subject of racing, there isn't much to report. In regards to the upcoming 2023 FLYC racing season, I would plan on mostly the same as seasons prior with a few minor changes. Definitely stay tuned. I will provide a more complete preview of the 2023 racing season in the next edition of *Port Tacks*. So, with racing on the back burner, I have other things on my mind. Sort of.

Winter in the Finger Lakes is great for sailing the online forums like *Sailboat Owners*, *SailNet*, and the ever surly *Sailing Anarchy*, but for me it is also for reflection, setting goals, and preparing my boat for the next season in the anticipation of pushing limits and doing so with confidence in the integrity of my sailboat. And in this vein of thought, I will use this month's column to illustrate an example of how I have used my time off the racecourse to prepare for time on the racecourse. This is a tale of disaster that didn't happen and how it has shaped my time during this winter's off season.

When buying a sailboat of a certain age, deferred maintenance is unavoidable. When I took stewardship of *Independence* back in 2017, she was already pushing 40, and although in decent shape for her age, there were some issues that needed to be addressed. Thankfully none that were beyond my limited abilities and were not related to seaworthiness. During my first off-season (before I even sailed the boat) I was using the dark months of winter to fix a few items and prepare the boat the best I could. Over the years the list of off-season maintenance and repair has taken on greater challenges and with it, I have grown more confident in my vessel. I take care of my boat so my boat can take care of me.

But from 2017, when I first cast my eyes upon my boat-to-be, there has remained a nasty and persistent "blemish". Since then, I had assumed this "blemish" was mostly cosmetic. Little did I know that as I pushed the boat harder with every passing season below the "blemish" was an inherent weakness that could eventually give way, resulting in a dangerous structural failure – likely under the heightened strains experienced on the racecourse under trying conditions. This wasn't related to standing rigging as one might suspect, but instead it was related to the main sheet and the traveler and, more precisely, the deck it was mounted to.

SV Independence

The design of my boat's cockpit is rather compact, with two seats (lazarette lids) running fore and aft on each side of the cockpit. Running athwartships immediately forward of the bench seats is what I call a "bridge deck". It is at the same level of the lazarette lids and is usually stepped onto as one passes in and out of the companion way. It is on this bridge deck (along its aft edge) that the traveler resides. The traveler is mounted with 12 bolts that penetrate the deck (6 per side), with washers and lock nuts accessible from below in the aft bilge.



Figure 1: Not a great photo but shown is how the traveler is mounted on the aft end of the bridge deck, forward of the lazarette seats.



Figure 2: The "blemish" on the starboard side of the bridge deck. This was taken at the end of 2022 season but had not changed much since taking ownership in 2017.

The “blemish” I refer to were spider cracks on the bridge deck gel coat emanating from the traveler mounting area on both sides of the bridge deck, though less pronounced on the port side. The cracks were ugly, but I learned to live with them, especially since the task of repairing them was well beyond my expertise and comfort level. But with time and experience confidence builds and now, half a decade later, this was the off-season I was waiting for in order to repair it.

Stepping back and giving some thought to the situation, I was determined to do this repair myself and even though it was winter and conditions normally prevent this type of work until spring (when I would be really anxious to splash). I was determined to do as much as possible over the winter months given temperature limitations of materials and comfortable working conditions. I was hoping to at least complete the removal of the damaged decking and to prep the work area for completion in warmer spring temperatures. What I didn't expect was exceptionally mild conditions and how easy it was to mitigate the colder temps with good timing, ingenuity, and some basic resources.

But first, like any big task requiring a multitude of steps and materials (many of which I had no experience with) I had to get my ducks in order. The result of my research was a written-out procedure for the removal, core repair, fiberglass lay-up and applying new gel coat. This would be my guide to follow, and I would use it to document my work and progress. Based on my planned procedure, the procurement of needed materials and supplies began in earnest and soon enough parcels from Total Boat and other vendors began to arrive.

Around Thanksgiving I was ready to start. First up, remove the top skin. This was done with efficiency and very little mess using a vibrating bladed multi-tool. (Without a doubt this is my favorite new tool!) Once the skin was removed, the damage was clear. The end grain balsa core was very rotted and had lost any semblance of structural integrity. The lower skin appeared to be in pretty good shape except for where the fender washers on the traveler bolts had compressed the spongy core and deformed the lower fiberglass skin - dimpling it upward at several of the bolt holes.

Based on my analysis, it was this 1/8-inch thick lower skin of fiberglass (with obvious deformation at some of the bolt locations) that was providing most of the structure supporting the traveler. Had I suffered an accidental and violent gibe on a heavy wind day, the forces may have torn the traveler free, likely taking part of the deck with it! And not being confident that the lower skin was entirely sound, prudence dictated the addition of a more substantial backing plate to the underside of the area under repair.

Throughout, this was an incremental process, with a domino effect of steps. There were many little tasks that had to be done before the main act of laying up a new end grain balsa core and a fiberglass skin above. This meant a lot of trips to the boat for little incidental tasks while also continuing my education regarding materials and construction techniques.

For instance, during core removal I found partially filled holes where a *different* traveler had been previously mounted about 6 inches forward of the current locale. From above, these holes

appeared to have been filled and successfully obscured with gel coat. And well done too. I didn't know they were there. What I did know is that drops of nasty brown water would occasionally puddle in the cabin adjacent to the location of interest. Ah-ha! These earlier holes were never filled on the bottom skin and water was dripping out of the rotted core through these holes (well hidden, I will add) onto the headliner below; eventually landing and pooling near the galley. Before the main event, I now had to find, fill, and patch these holes.

I also was learning about epoxy versus polyester resins, laying up fiberglass cloth (1708, OSM, etc.) and the intricacies of gel coat. My boat was likely made using polyester resin. Gel coat is basically a polyester resin and doesn't mechanically bond well with epoxy, but it does laminate nicely onto a like material (polyester resin). So even though epoxy would have been my preference and did serve some use for filling and patching the aforementioned holes, I had to learn all about using polyester resin and gel coat, materials completely new to me.

Briefly, polyester resin uses a catalyst to cure, but will remain tacky if exposed to air (O₂). It also cures quickly allowing one to laminate layer upon tacky layer - creating a strong chemical bond. The last layer needs to be sealed from air for it to fully cure hard. This can be done by adding wax to the resin or sealing it with a sprayed coat of PVA (polyvinyl alcohol). If anyone wants more info, I recommend the following websites and resources: Total Boat (Jamestown Distributors) and BoatworksToday.com. Both offer instructional videos on boat maintenance and repair. Total Boat also offers excellent phone based technical support.

Next up was adding the backing plates below. To add strength to the underside of the area being rebuilt I fabricated a 1/4-inch thick backing plate by sandwiching two 1/8-inch pieces of Luan ply with a layer of heavy fiberglass cloth between and a generous helping of thickened epoxy. Sealed along all surfaces, these new backing plates were then glassed into place against the lower skin (below the bolt holes) with thickened epoxy and a layer of 1708 fiberglass cloth. This was then followed up with another layer of 1708 glass across the exposed (lower) surface of the backing plates and tabbed onto adjacent structural components.

With these and other incidentals behind me, it was time to tackle the main event: replacing the core and building a new glass skin for the bridge deck. Essentially, it involved using laminating polyester resin to lay up fiberglass mat, new end grain balsa core, several layers of fiberglass (1708, four layers CSM - chopped strand mat-veil) and then PVA to seal it for a full cure. Prior to working and throughout the lay up the workspace maintained a temperature of about 75°F and for the overnight incandescent lights were all that was needed to warm the surfaces for effective curing. As for me, after about four hours of wearing a facial respirator, I was happy to get out, breathe some fresh air and let it cure. Which it did as planned. A bit of sanding and fairing came next and then gel coating.

For me, gel coat was mysterious and a bit scary. My thoughts were pervaded with worries of how I might mess this up. Then it occurred to me - if I didn't nail it perfectly, I remained confident that I would make it stronger and even though it's a



Figure 3: Port side after gel coat cure but before sanding.

DIY job, it would still look better than the ugly cracks that were there before. The boat's 42 years old, after all! So headlong I plunged into the great unknown... Using brushes, I commenced to laminate layers of gel coat one on top of the next. The final layer (fifth or sixth) was sealed with PVA and kept warm with lights. After walking away, I was again delighted to remove the respirator and get some fresh air.

Can you imagine the trepidation I felt upon my return a day or two later to see the outcome? Did it fully cure? Was it warm enough with the lights? What would I find? I am happy to report it was cured and looked pretty darn good. Sure, there were some brush marks, but I had put the last layer on heavy and after wet sanding from 220 to 1500 grit the effect was mostly ameliorated. It looks pretty good; definitely not professional, but much better than before and if it looks worse in the sunlight, I wouldn't hesitate to apply gel coat again.

As of this writing, most of this project is behind me. On account of unseasonably warm weather and a couple rare sunny days, confining my workspace (to keep it warmer), and a little heat when needed; it was possible to do the laminating fiberglass



Figure 4: Starboard side after gel coat cure but before sanding.

lay-up and even the gel coat during what normally is considered the "dead of winter" in the Finger Lakes.

The result is that it looks a lot better, and I feel much greater confidence in its structural integrity going forward. The only remaining tasks include buffing and polishing the gel coat and then remounting the traveler. You can be assured that those new bolt holes will be properly potted!!!

For some observers the hubris of attempting this during the winter would be untenable; but be assured that with sufficient planning and preparation and careful timing, I was able to make it work, and best of all, use my time off-the-water with greater productivity. Even though I have a couple more items to get the boat ready for next season, getting this job done ensures that my preparations for a timely launch are less burdensome and that means more time on the water with a greater confidence in both me and my sailboat.

Cheers and stay warm.

- Don

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Figure 5: Port side after wet sanding.



Figure 6: Starboard side after wet sanding.

Editor's Corner

by Tom Alley

SV Tomfoolery



Looking Back

With each new issue of *Port Tacks*, there's always that challenge of what I should write about. Several topics have come to mind, but when I check, I've already written about them in one or more issues. While I was looking

for this issue, I discovered I've been editing this newsletter since 2003 – twenty consecutive years. Wow! I knew it had been a while, but I certainly didn't think it had been THAT long!

Back then the newsletter was mailed out to everyone as a paper copy printed on 11 by 17-inch paper. What a time-consuming pain that was! Needless to say, the club certainly didn't put out six issues each year. We were lucky to get half that many in most years.

That changed in 2011 when we went to electronic distribution and a regular publishing schedule in each even-numbered month of the year. I'm happy to say that we've done pretty well at maintaining that publication rate, missing only one issue in each of 2012 and 2014. Not a bad run, if you ask me.

Likewise, our club continues to soldier forward. While other clubs in our region have missed whole sailing seasons due to low water, then high water, then pandemics, we've been fortunate to have continued our quiet enjoyment of a beautiful inland Finger Lake. We even enjoy a deep-water marina that hasn't grown shallow with silt and sediment. Hopefully, this too will continue.

Looking Ahead

Although this time of year is typically "down time" for most sailors and boaters, it's not too early to begin looking forward. In fact, it's the perfect time. This is especially true if you have any ideas to further evolve and enhance the various activities our club engages in. The Race Committee is actively working to draft a schedule of racing and cruising events for the 2023 season. Similarly, the Social Committee is likewise engaged with their planning, and both groups are working together so that their various schedules will mesh to provide a steady flow of activities throughout the coming boating season.

If you have an idea for something new, or a suggestion for improving something we've been doing for a while, please share your thoughts with the respective committee that plans the event. By the time we start splashing our boats, it will be too late to affect changes for the current year without seriously disrupting preparations that have already been made.

Want to suggest a different venue for a social event? Speak now. Got a gripe about race scoring or handicapping? Let someone know now. The bottom line? Speak up; get involved! You won't regret it.

Stay warm. See all of you in the boatyard soon!

- Tom

Well, your editor has opened his big mouth again. If you wish to agree, or (more likely) to tell him he doesn't know squat, please send your comments to editor@f lyc.us.

Finger Lakes Yacht Club

Membership Application

Membership renewals are due by May 1st. **Annual dues are \$45.**
Please send this form and a check to:

Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc.
c/o Katie Alley, Secretary
218 Pleasant St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Are you also a member of the
U.S. Power Squadron? If so,
please check this box.

Application: **New member** **Renewal**

Important: Please be sure to include the names of all of your "dependent" family members. This will ensure that membership privileges are awarded properly.

Name(s): _____

Please indicate which areas interest you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Web site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cruising | <input type="checkbox"/> Sailing classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social activities | |

Address: _____

Phone: Home: (____) _____ Work (____) _____
Cell: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Boat Name _____ Type: Sail Power

Make/Model _____ Length _____

Boat Year _____ Location/Slip# _____

By this application, I/we promise to uphold the By-laws of the Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc. and to comply with its rules and regulations.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____